

VZCZCXRO0572
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1924/01 2061428
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 251428Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6568
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 4668
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHFMISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001924

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: CALABAR: NIGERIA'S MODEL CITY

¶1. Summary. Emboffs in mid-July visited Calabar in Cross Rivers State and were pleasantly surprised to find a Nigerian city that was clean, functional, and bustling with new business ventures. Unlike its underdeveloped and poorly-governed neighbors in the Niger Delta and elsewhere, Calabar stands out as a city providing a better quality of life for its inhabitants and enticing investment opportunities for outsiders. Emboff interlocutors uniformly credited Governor Donald Duke for the city's progress and when solicited, gave a ringing endorsement to Duke's ambition for higher office. End summary.

Tidy and Well-Managed

¶2. Widely considered to be the cleanest city in the country, Calabar seems to have an uncommonly effective waste management program for a major metropolitan area in Nigeria. Local residents appear to have a lot of pride in their tidy city and made several references to its reputation for cleanliness in discussions with Emboffs. There are scores of "Keep Calabar Clean" trash cans scattered throughout the city and garbage trucks routinely picking up trash on the main avenues. Unlike other cities in Nigeria, Emboffs noted that most of the water ducts were devoid of rubbish and consequently probably much more efficient in reducing flooding during rainstorms.

¶3. Calabar's water delivery system also appears to be exceptional. Paddy Prendergast, general manager of the Mirage Hotel, told Emboffs that he has had no problem with getting water in his hotel and noted that it was "potable." He emphasized that the quality of the water delivered by the Cross Rivers Water Board was much better than his hotel's back-up supply of borehole water. This is rarely the case in other major cities where the borehole supply is considered to be the more pristine and reliable source of water. Even the military has had positive things to say about the water supply. This month the commander for the 13th army brigade in Calabar publicly thanked the water board for five years of uninterrupted service. The head of the water board graciously responded and asked for the 10 million naira past due for the services.

¶4. Equally notable is the Cross Rivers Broadcast Company which, in addition to its radio broadcast, provides over the air television broadcasts of CNN, Friends, and Nigerian television. A reliable, well-run state television station is practically unheard of in the rest of Nigeria and is another testament to the uniqueness of this state.

¶5. Most of the praise for these promising developments appears to belong to the state,s young Governor Donald Duke. Only in his forties, Duke is widely recognized for improving the business climate in Cross Rivers and even reducing crime. Prendergast was effuse in his endorsement of Duke as an effective and visionary Governor in Nigeria. He credited Duke with improving relations with the police, maintaining superior roads, and developing new business opportunities. In addition to the Tinapa Business resort (Ref A), Prendergast cited the opening of a large cement plant in Calabar as tangible evidence of improved business climate under Duke's leadership.

¶6. The Governor,s State Security Advisor had similar remarks to Emboffs in a subsequent meeting, saying that Duke was attempting to expand Cross River,s traditional sources of revenue-generation beyond the civil service and subsistence agriculture. The Governor plans to station police on the main roads to Tinapa and the Calabar Free Trade Zone to improve security and boost investor confidence. He has also contacted Motorola about setting up better communication infrastructure to attract international and regional businessmen.

Comment

¶7. Although none of Emboffs meetings were focused on national politics and next year's elections, it was difficult to visit such a well-run city and not considered the

ABUJA 00001924 002 OF 002

potential benefits of a Duke presidency or vice-presidency. The Governor is frequently mentioned as a possible candidate for the ruling party. His detractors say he is too young and not a serious contender, and critics point to several attacks on opposition members and questionable real estate deals involving Duke and his family. Still, the prospects of electing a governor from the Niger Delta with a proven track record for good governance is too alluring to dismiss out of hand. While it may be too early to predict whether Duke has a real chance, its clear that that he is one of the most appealing candidates out there.
FUREY